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MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	ANDERSON BAHAMON SINGER 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	JEAN PAUL SAXOPHONIST 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	MAILLEYN ALVARADO VIOLINIST 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	MAILLEYN ALVARADO VIOLINIST 7:00 TO 9:00 P.M.	RICKY THOMAS GUITAR 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.



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New wave: sea power turned into energy at Los Angeles port

San Pedro, United States
Floating blue paddles dance on the waves that lap a dock in the Port of Los Angeles, silently converting the power of the sea into usable electricity.

This innovative installation may hold one of the keys to accelerating a transition away from fossil fuels that scientists say is necessary if the world is to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

"The project is very simple and easy," Inna Braverman, co-founder of Israeli start-up Eco Wave Power, told AFP.

Looking a little like piano keys, the floaters rise and fall with each wave.



Floaters are released into the water during a demonstration of Eco Wave Power electricity generation technology using the power of ocean waves in the harbor at AltaSea at the Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro, California, on August 26, 2025.

They are connected to hydraulic pistons that push a biodegradable fluid through pipes to a container filled with accumulators, which resemble large red scuba tanks.

When the pressure is released, it spins a turbine that generates electrical current.

If this pilot project convinces the California authorities, Braverman hopes to cover the entire 13-kilometer (eight-mile) breakwater protecting the port with hundreds of floaters that together would produce enough electricity to power 60,000 US homes.

Supporters of the technology say wave energy is an endlessly renewable and always reliable source of power.

Unlike solar power, which produces nothing at night, or wind power, which depends on the weather, the sea is always in motion.

And there is a lot of it.

- Tough tech -

The waves off the American West Coast could theoretically power 130 million homes or supply around a third of the electricity used every year in the United States, according to the US

Department of Energy.

However, wave energy remains the poor relation of other, better-known renewables, and has not been successfully commercialized at a large-enough scale.

The history of the sector is full of company shipwrecks and projects sunk by the brutality of the high seas. Developing devices robust enough to withstand the fury of the waves, while transmitting electricity via underwater cables to the shore, has proven to be an impossible task so far.

"Ninety-nine percent of

competitors chose to install in the middle of the ocean, where it's super expensive, where it's breaking down all the time, so they can't really make projects work," Braverman said.

With her retractable dock-mounted device, the entrepreneur believes she has found the answer.

"When the waves are too high for the system to handle, the floaters just rise to the upward position until the storm passes, so you have no damage."

The design appeals to Krish Thiagarajan Sharman, a

professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

"The Achilles heel of wave energy is in the costs of maintenance and inspection," he told AFP.

"So having a device close to shore, where you can walk on a breakwater and then inspect the device, makes a lot of sense."

Sharman, who is not affiliated with the project and whose laboratory is testing various wave energy equipment, said projects tend to be suited to smaller-scale demands, like powering remote islands.

"This eight-mile breakwater, that's not a common thing. It's a rare opportunity, a rare location where such a long wavefront is available for producing power," he said.

- AI power demand -

Braverman's Eco Wave Power is already thinking ahead, having identified dozens more sites in the United States that could be suitable for similar projects. The project predates Donald Trump's administration, but even before the political environment in Washington turned against renewables, the company was already looking beyond the US. □

Back on Earth, Artemis II crew still finding their footing

Houston, United States

Nearly a week after their Pacific splashdown, the astronauts who crewed the Artemis II mission that flew

around the Moon told reporters Thursday they have yet to fully grasp the magnitude of the moment.

"It's been a week of medical testing, physical testing, doctors, science objectives," mission commander Reid Wiseman said during a press conference at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston.

"We have not had that decompression," he added. The 50-year-old led fellow Americans Victor Glover and Christina Koch, and Canadian crewmate Jeremy Hansen, on a mission that took them farther into space than anyone has ever gone before.

Adjusting to life on Earth is taking a beat.

"Tomorrow will be one week, and I just was trying

to live in a little hole for one week, been off social media, not on the news. So, no, I don't know," Glover, who piloted the mission, told reporters.

Nonetheless, he said his children and neighbors have clued him in to the excitement.

Artemis II was the first crewed mission to venture to the Moon's orbit since 1972, and the only one in history to include a woman, or a Black astronaut, or a non-American. Their voyage was broadcast live by US space agency NASA, and the media coverage of the launch and return to Earth was watched by mil-

lions of people.

For Koch, waking up to the reality means remembering gravity has taken hold.

"In the first few days, I thought I was floating. I truly thought I was floating, and I had to convince myself I wasn't," Koch said.

Their mission lasted almost 10 days, but NASA has ambitions to return to the Moon for longer visits to establish a base in preparation for future missions to Mars.

The United States is targeting a lunar landing in 2028, before the end of President Donald Trump's term and a deadline set by rivals in China. □



NASA's Artemis II mission pilot Victor Glover (R) speaks as commander Reid Wiseman looks on during a press conference at Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, on April 16, 2026.

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The unsinkable spirit: six-year-old Titanic superfan captures hearts on surprise voyage

PIGEON FORGE, TN — For most six-year-olds, a long car ride involves a steady stream of "Are we there yet?" and tablets playing cartoons. But for Weston Montgomery, the journey from his home in South Carolina to the rolling foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains was different. Weston wasn't looking for cartoons; he was looking for icebergs.

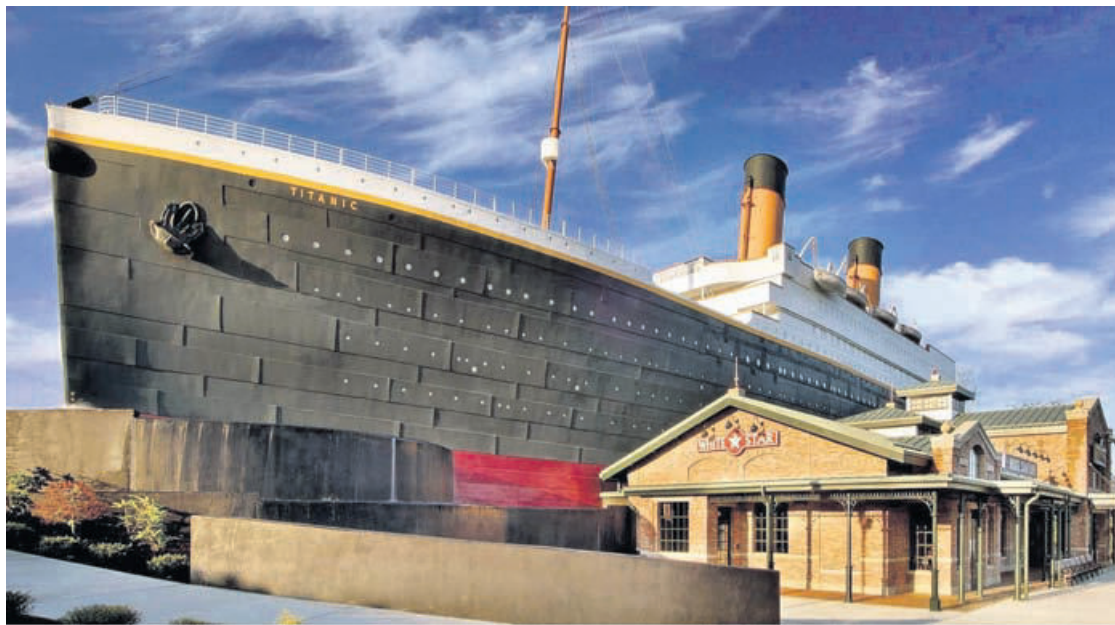
Clad in a miniature wool captain's coat and clutching a well-worn book about the 1912 disaster, Weston believed he was on a routine trip to visit his grandmother. He had no idea that his parents, Sarah and Michael, had spent months orchestrating a surprise that would bring the history he lived and breathed into sharp, chilly reality.

The moment the Montgomery family's SUV rounded the bend in Pigeon Forge and the massive, scale-model prow of the Titanic Museum Attraction loomed over the Parkway, the silence in the backseat was broken by a gasp so sharp it seemed to steal the air from the car. The video of the encounter, captured by Sarah on her phone and later shared with millions online, shows Weston pressing his face against the glass, his eyes widening to the size of dinner plates.

"Is that... is that the ship, Dad?" he whispered, his voice trembling with a mix of disbelief and reverence. When his father confirmed they were stopping, Weston didn't scream or cheer. He began to cry—quiet, overwhelmed tears of a boy seeing his hero for the first time.

A Prodigy of the Past

Weston's obsession with the RMS Titanic began when he was four, triggered by a chance encounter with



a documentary on public television. While other children his age were memorizing the names of dinosaurs or superheroes, Weston was memorizing the tonnage of the Olympic-class liners and the specific temperature of the Atlantic water on the night of April 14, 1912.

"He doesn't just like the ship; he respects it," says his mother, Sarah. "He knows the names of the musicians who played on the deck. He knows the difference between the Scotch boilers and the engines. It's a level of focus we've never seen in a child his age."

The Titanic Museum Attraction, one of the world's largest permanent Titanic museums, is more than just a collection of artifacts; it is a somber memorial. Upon entry, every guest is given a boarding pass featuring the name of an actual passenger or crew member. Weston was handed the card of John "Jack" Phillips, the senior wireless operator who famously stayed at his post until the very end.

Walking the Decks

The staff at the museum, alerted by the viral interest in Weston's arrival, gave the

young "Captain" a welcome befitting his passion. Lead docents, dressed in period-accurate officer uniforms, saluted Weston as he entered.

The highlight of the visit was the Grand Staircase, a \$1 million replica built from the original blueprints of the Harland and Wolff shipyard. As Weston climbed the stairs, running his hand along the ornate oak carvings, he stopped at the clock—the same design seen in the 1997 film and the historical photos. For a moment, the bustling museum seemed to go silent.

"He stood there for five minutes just looking at the clock," Michael Montgomery recalled. "He told me, 'Dad, this is where the people felt fancy.' He has this incredible ability to empathize with the people who were actually there."

The most emotional moment of the tour occurred at the Memorial Wall, where the names of the 2,208 passengers and crew are etched into glass. Weston insisted on finding Jack Phillips' name. When he found it, he placed a small, plastic Titanic model he had brought from home at the base of the wall.

The Power of Curiosity

The story of Weston's surprise has resonated far beyond the borders of Tennessee. In an era dominated by digital distractions and fleeting trends, the image of a young child deeply invested in a historical event from over a century ago has struck a chord.

Dr. Aris Whitaker, a child psychologist specializing in gifted learners, suggests that Weston's "superfan" status is a beautiful example of deep-dive learning. "Children like Weston find an anchor in history. The Titanic is a story of grand engineering, human bravery, and tragedy. It provides a framework for a child to understand the world's complexities. Seeing his joy reminds us all of the power of genuine curiosity." The museum's owner, Mary Kellogg-Joslyn, was moved by Weston's visit. "Our mission is to keep the stories of the 2,208 souls alive," she said in a statement. "When we see a child like Weston, we know that history is in good hands. He isn't just looking at a ship; he's carrying a legacy."

An Unforgettable Voyage

As the family prepared to

leave, the museum presented Weston with a special "Officer-in-Training" certificate and a piece of coal recovered from the 1994 recovery expedition—a genuine piece of the ship he had spent half his life studying.

For Weston, the trip wasn't about the gift shop or the photos. It was about the connection. When asked what his favorite part was, he didn't mention the grand staircase or the cold water tank that simulates the ocean's temperature.

"I liked that I got to be there," Weston said, adjusting his captain's hat. "The ship is big, but the stories are bigger. I want to make sure no one forgets them."

As the Montgomerys drove away, Weston sat in the back, his piece of coal held tightly in his hand. He wasn't looking at a screen or a book. He was looking out the window, watching the prow of the ship disappear into the sunset, already planning his next voyage into the past.

In the heart of a six-year-old, the "Unsinkable" ship has found a permanent home, proving that some legends never truly rest at the bottom of the sea—they live on in the eyes of the next generation. □

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Pope Leo XIV waves to the crowd from the Popemobile as he arrives to lead the Holy Mass at the area in front of Japoma Stadium in Douala on the fifth day of an 11-day apostolic journey to Africa, on April 17, 2026.

Pope slams AI abuse after Trump's Jesus post

Douala, Cameroon

Pope Leo XIV on Friday warned that the AI boom could fuel "conflict, fear and violence" while on a trip to Cameroon marked by his ongoing spat with US President Donald Trump.

While Leo has called for caution on artificial intelligence several times since his election in May 2025, his latest warning comes as Trump faces a backlash over a now-deleted AI-generated post seemingly depicting the US leader as Jesus.

After holding Mass in the stifling heat in Cameroon's economic capital Douala for more than 120,000 joyous worshippers -- the biggest event of his landmark Africa trip so far -- the leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics sounded the alarm over the perils of the technology.

"The challenge posed by these systems is greater than it appears: it is not just about the use of new technologies, but about the gradual replacement of reality by its simulation," he said in a speech to teachers and students at the Catholic University of Central Africa in the capital Yaounde. "In this way, polarisation, conflict, fear and violence spread. What is at stake is not merely the risk of error, but a transformation in our very relationship with truth."

It marks the pontiff's latest outspoken intervention on his 11-day Africa tour that has seen him abandon his previous restraint to deliver impassioned pleas for world peace -- and tussle with fellow American Trump.

- 'Handful of tyrants' -

After the pope criticised the US-Israeli war with Iran, Trump lashed out at Leo, branding him "weak on crime and terrible for foreign policy".

He then posted an AI-generated image seemingly depicting himself as a Christ-like figure, which he later deleted after religious leaders accused him of blasphemy. And shortly after Leo denounced the

"handful of tyrants" ravaging the world in a speech on Thursday, the U.S. president said the pope needed to understand the realities of a "nasty world".

Far from the Trump broadsides, Leo has been greeted by adoring, singing-and-dancing crowds wherever he has gone in Cameroon.

Some of Friday's throng had travelled far or arrived the previous night in the hope of catching a glimpse of the pope at his Douala Mass.

Waving "branches of peace" and Vatican flags, to lively choral music punctuated by percussion, the crowd chanted "Long live the pope!" as Leo arrived in a popemobile at the esplanade outside the Japoma Stadium.

"It's the achievement of a Christian lifetime. When I was little, I thought you couldn't see the pope with your own two eyes," Marguerite Tedga, 72, said after waiting all night with friends from her parish.

Edith Fifi, a 25-year-old beautician, said seeing the pontiff gave her "a feeling of deliverance".

"I was deeply moved by his message, and what I remember most is his call for sharing," she said.

But some Cameroonian Catholics had feared that Leo's visit could help President Paul Biya, who has ruled with an iron fist since 1982, burnish his image.

Douala, one of central Africa's largest ports, was among the cities to see a violent crackdown on demonstrations against the re-election in October of a man who at the age of 93 is already the world's oldest head of state.

Witnesses have reported that the security forces fired live rounds into the crowds. The authorities have acknowledged dozens of deaths without giving a precise toll. □

Google says AI helped it thwart billions of 'bad ads'



The Google logo is seen at an unauthorised service center in a shopping mall in Jakarta on April 8, 2026.

San Francisco, United States

Google on Thursday said tools utilizing Gemini artificial intelligence helped it derail some 8.2 billion online ads which violated its policies last year.

"We really dove into how to rethink our systems using AI," Google's vice president of ads privacy and safety Keerat Sharma said during a briefing with journalists.

"Our latest models better understand intent, helping us spot malicious content and preemptively block it, even when it's designed to evade detection."

An annual Ads Safety Report released by Google indicated that the internet giant's systems caught more than 99 percent of ads that broke its rules before they were shown to people online.

"Our goal is to stop badness before it is ever exposed to any user," Sharma said.

Google made 35 changes to its ad policies last year in updates intended to help keep pace with evolving trends in scam marketing, according to Sharma.

Gemini-enhanced ad system tools analyze hundreds of billions of "signals," such as the age of advertiser accounts, how they are acting, and patterns in campaigns to determine if something is amiss, he explained.

"We took a step back and really re-thought how we wanted to build ad safety from a ground-up perspective," Sharma said.

"With Gemini, we've been able to take a step back and combine hundreds of billions of signals to get a much better understanding of what an advertiser's intent is based on the combination of everything that we know about the advertiser," Sharma said.

"All of that put together gives us this really nuanced perspective as to whether the intent of a specific ad is positive or potentially harmful."

While bad actors are using generative AI to create deceptive ads at scale, Gemini helps detect and block them in real time, according to Google.

Ad tactics barred by Google policies include deepfakes of public figures or misappropriation of their genuine images.

Another layer to Google's ad defense is verifying advertisers, which account for more than 90 percent of ads served on Google, according to Sharma.

"Verification is a tool that we use to ensure that an advertiser is indeed a legitimate entity," Sharma said.

"We're continuing to evolve our defenses to stay ahead of even the most advanced schemes." he said. □

Benin leans into painful past to attract tourists

Ouidah, Benin

Tourists crowded beneath the Door of No Return, an arch built by the beach at Ouidah in southern Benin in memory of those crammed onto slave ships bound for the New World.

Benin has in recent years leaned into its painful past to encourage tourism.

Once a key departure point in the transatlantic slave trade, the coastal town of Ouidah lies at the heart of the push to reclaim the country's history, culture and heritage.

Standing nearly 17 metres (56 feet) tall on the seafront, the Door of No Return has been fully restored, now a must-see landmark for visitors.

Its ochre-and-gold facade is carved with figures of chained slaves, frozen mid-stride towards the ocean. Nearby, a life-size replica of L'Aurore one of the last three-masted ships to leave Ouidah for Cuba around 1860 is set to open soon as an immersive museum of the slave trade.

"It reminds us of where we come from. It's important to develop tourism around our history because it's very rich, little known, and we want to showcase it," said Arsene Ahounou, an engineer from the commercial capital Cotonou visiting for the day.



Visitors pose for a photograph next to the Door of No Return monument in Ouidah on April 6, 2026.

"For us natives, understanding our history matters," he added.

Pausing for selfies with friends visiting from Nigeria, Onyinye Anumba said that seeing the site with her own eyes was "awesome".

"As an African, I've read many things about this place... so just being here makes me proud about what Africa has," she said.

- 'Demystify Vodun' -

Elsewhere, tourists explored the 13th-century Python Temple to learn about Voodoo culture the popular animist religion rooted in Ouidah.

As many posed for photos with snakes draped around

their shoulders, guides explained the reptile's spiritual significance in Vodoun (Vodun in the local Fon language) beliefs.

Having worked in Beninese tourism for more than 35 years, Modeste Zinsou, the temple's head guide, said the sector had evolved.

"This isn't mass tourism, it's cultural tourism. The sacred element remains. We're reconstructing our own history, in which we completely demystify Vodun and the clichés around it," he said. Benin is the birthplace of Voodoo, which now has its own international festival, the Vodun Days.

The three days of dancing, mask parades and tradi-

tional ceremonies have become a major tourist attraction.

This year it drew around two million visitors, most of them Beninese.

"The government has worked to encourage domestic tourism, meaning Beninese people going out and reclaiming their identity," added Zinsou.

- 'Our Eiffel Tower' -

To boost tourism, Benin has launched major infrastructure projects, including road and hotel renovations.

A Club Med resort is planned for 2027 and visa procedures have been eased for many national-

ties.

"We're not a country with mineral wealth, so we had to identify where our wealth lies," said Alain Godonou, an adviser to the president on heritage and museums.

"History shows that Benin is a land of great cultures and traditions, and a witness to a pivotal moment in human history the slave trade," he said.

Godonou hopes tourism will account for 10 to 15 percent of GDP within a decade, up from about six percent today.

The recent election in the west African country was to replace the architect of this tourism drive, outgoing president Patrice Talon, who is stepping down after two five-year terms.

His successor, Romuald Wadagni, the finance minister from the ruling party, has pledged to carry the projects forward.

Since 2024, Benin has allowed anyone with an African ancestor who was enslaved and shipped to the Americas to acquire Beninese nationality.

"It was important for Benin to do justice to this diaspora by granting the nationality that should have been theirs," Godonou said.

In the heart of Cotonou, the country's largest city, the Amazon Monument is now a major attraction. □

Brussels set for U.S.-style bonanza for America's 250th birthday

Brussels, Belgium

Fireworks, a US pop star and a fighter jet flyby: Brussels will host one of the biggest events marking the 250th anniversary of American independence this summer, according to Donald Trump's ambassador to Belgium.

Envoy Bill White told AFP the U.S.-staged bonanza would be the "largest, biggest, best, most amazing, extraordinary, phenomenal, fantastic event outside of the president's events in Washington."

Trump has announced a series of spectacular celebrations around the July 4 anniversary -- unveiling plans to build a huge arch in the nation's capital to mark the milestone.

The Brussels festivities are planned for June 28 in the Cinquantenaire park, in the heart of the city's European quarter.

White said the event was expected to draw 5,000 people and would feature a speech by Prime Minister Bart De Wever.

"We have Secretary General Mark Rutte, who's a great friend and a great guy representing NATO, and we hope to have Ursula von der Leyen, who is representing the EU," he said.

On the U.S. side, White said he had invited "senior people" from the Trump administration touting a personal relationship with the president going back three decades.

Guests will be treated to a flyby of U.S.-made aircraft, a half-hour firework show, and a headline act by a "very well known" male U.S. artist, he promised.

Contacted by AFP, the offices of De Wever, Rutte and von der Leyen did not immediately confirm they would be taking part in the event. □



U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Bill White poses after an interview in Brussels on April 17, 2026.

In Belgium, prime minister's wife shares anorexia struggle

Antwerp, Belgium

Just weeks after her husband won Belgium's national elections in 2024, Veerle Hegge found herself in hospital for an eating disorder that almost claimed her life.

Nearly two years later including six months of full-time treatment Prime Minister Bart De Wever's wife shared with AFP why she chose to take her anorexia struggle public in a book that delves deep into her personal life.

"Mental illness is still surrounded by taboo," the 53-year-old schoolteacher said in an interview at her home in the port city of Antwerp. "It's something people feel uneasy, awkward even, to talk about."

"It's so important to get care early on when you are sick," she says, to avoid "falling in deeper."

"But you can only do that with help from the people around you."

Hegge has been De Wever's partner for three decades, through his long-time tenure as mayor of Antwerp and since he became prime minister last



Veerle Hegge, the wife of Belgium's Prime Minister Bart De Wever, speaks during an interview with AFP in Deurne, on April 13, 2026.

year, raising four children now aged 18 to 24.

Entitled "The weight of silence", her book focuses largely on the months she spent in hospital treatment in 2024 the time she needed to get back on her feet from a near-fatal battle with anorexia.

A striking scene recounts her hour-long car journey

to a clinic in eastern Belgium with De Wever in stony silence at the wheel after it became clear getting full-time specialist help had become a matter of "survival."

De Wever's Flemish conservatives had just won the national election, and he was tipped for prime minister.

His wife remembers thinking he must be "disappointed" in her but not daring to ask. At home, she says, everyone used to "tiptoe around" the matter of her illness.

She describes a "rushed" arrival at the clinic and the shock of finding herself alone, with a psychiatric patient tag around her

wrist.

"Bart couldn't stay long he had to get back to work as always," she writes in the book's opening pages. "We hugged briefly, and agreed to call one another. That was all. And Bart left."

Hegge speaks candidly of her loneliness and guilt at being away from home after so many years keeping family life ticking over while De Wever pursued his career although soon enough she was able to leave the hospital at weekends.

Later in the book, she writes that her husband had seemed "helpless" faced with her ordeal, and thanks him for sticking by her side.

- Buried trauma -

Much of Hegge's story is devoted to her childhood where her earliest memories are dominated by a mother prey to bouts of deep depression, whose fits of anger she grew to fear and second-guess.

Home life was often marred by silence and simmering conflict but that was not the hardest part of growing up. □

AI shamans' tell the fortunes of curious South Koreans

'Seoul, South Korea

The sound of tinkling bells drifts through an alley in central Seoul, an unmistakable sign that a shaman is near although in this case the mystic is a robot powered by artificial intelligence.

Many South Koreans still place great value in shamanic traditions, which purport to divine a per-

son's future based on the day and time they were born.

Practitioners, known as "mudang", wear long, colourful robes and perform dances and chants to commune with the gods sometimes even walking on sharp blades to demonstrate their spiritual connection.

However, at Vinaida, a

cultural products store in the capital, they are computer-generated avatars on screens.

Visitor Kim Da-ae, 36, called it a "unique experience".

A visit with a real shaman can feel "scary and burdensome", she told AFP.

"But I was just walking by and read this AI sign... So I walked in with a light heart."

Portraits of virtual shamans resembling characters from the popular animation "KPop Demon Hunters" greet passersby at Vinaida, which means "I pray earnestly" in Korean.

Inside a booth, Kim typed her name, gender and date of birth into a computer, before a shaman a suspended mask with the image of a human face projected onto it asked her to explain her concern through a headset.

The technology combines voice recognition with a generative AI chatbot so that the shaman and the customer can interact.

It then refers to a centuries-old belief system called "saju", or the "four pillars of destiny", to interpret their fate according to the year, month and day of their birth.

Customers then receive a plastic "talisman" bearing a digital QR code that they can scan with their phones to read their fortunes in detail.

Across the room, a bespectacled robot uses a camera and a mechanised arm to sketch and "read" a visitor's face, foretelling their prospects.

"A bright, well-balanced fortune. Resilient in the face of change, with auspicious relationships," an impressed Kim read from a printout.

"I felt a sense of similar-

ity with my fate because it matched my own personality, like valuing relationships while also being practical," she said.

- Twist on tradition -

Fortune-telling is deeply embedded in South Korean life, with newspapers publishing daily horoscopes based on "saju" principles.

Recent cultural hits such as "KPop Demon Hunters" Netflix's most-watched film of all time have riffed on shamanic traditions.

Vinaida has attracted around 100 visitors a day since opening in February, according to manager Kim Hae-seol. Each service costs up to 8,000 won (\$5.50).

"Customers have something tangible or meaningful to take away, which is probably why there aren't many who feel dissatisfied," Kim Hae-seol said. □



This picture taken on April 15, 2026 shows a man sitting before a bespectacled shaman robot that offers face-reading services to predict future prospects while sketching a portrait, at a Korean shamanism theme shop in Seoul.

Dining in? Try making some local favorites! How to make “funchi”



(Oranjestad)—One of the most famous Aruban snacks or appetizers is “funchi hasa” (fried polenta sticks), a super easy meal that adults and children will both enjoy. Here’s how to make it!

Before we start, get to know the basics

What is funchi hasa? Funchi, or Aruban polenta, is a popular side dish for local dishes, like soups, stews and fried fish. Made from a corn flour, water and butter mixture, this appetizer is traditionally eaten alongside a warm meal. However, locals also like to fry sticks of funchi for a quick and filling snack.

Ingredients (measured by heart)

1. Polenta flour/Funchi flour
2. Water
3. Butter
4. Salt to taste

Directions

Bring water to a boil in a medium-sized sauce pan. Add in some salt and butter to taste in the boiling water and let this dissolve and melt. Then, gradually add the flour while stirring with a wooden spoon. The mixture will start to begin to harden pretty fast, so be careful not to add too much. At this phase of cooking, you want a goopy thick mixture, but thin enough so you can continue to stir to get all the lumps out.

After reaching a semi-firm, yet flexible texture, grab a baking pan or any large, deep plate, and pour the mixture in. Be sure that this plate is wet or greased so that the mixture does not stick to the bottom. Let this cool completely while it firms up for the last time. Once it's cooled you



can enjoy it as is, topped with some butter or shredded cheese. Or, you can take it to another level of deliciousness.

When your funchi is firm enough, cut it into strips (size is up to you). Heat up some oil in a pan and fry those babies up! After frying, you can top it with some cheese or enjoy it with your favorite dipping sauce. □

Photo credit of fried funchi sticks: Jacqueline Felida on Pinterest.

Adventist Church in Aruba recognized as a National Monument

(Oranjestad)—The Government of Aruba, in collaboration with the Monument Bureau, officially recognized the Seventh-day Adventist Church building on Bernhardstraat as a National Monument during a special ceremony held on April 14, 2026.

Originally dedicated on July 11, 1936, the building is one of the oldest Adventist temples on the island and holds significant historical, cultural, and spiritual value. The recognition followed a formal request submitted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Aruba, after which it was classified as a Category A monument.

Among those present was Aruba's Prime Minister, Mr. Mike Eman, who highlighted the importance of preserving structures that represent faith, community, and na-

tional identity. He also noted that restoring the building could inspire renewal in society, strengthening values and purpose.

During the event, a historical overview was presented, noting that the Adventist message reached Aruba in the 1920s through missionary efforts, leading to the establishment of the first congregation in 1934 and the construction of the temple in 1936.

Over the years, the building has served as a church, school, and community center, impacting generations of residents.

Pastor Calix Ashby, financial director of the regional office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, explained that the restoration process began more than two years ago, emphasizing the importance



of preserving the building's identity and historical value.

For his part, Pastor Virgil Sams, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Aruba, underscored the spiritual value of the temple as a place where generations have found hope, faith, and purpose. He also recognized the contribution of long-serving member Eric Principaal for his service and dedication to the Church's mission.

The ceremony concluded with the placement of the official protected monument seal on the building and the signing of the agreement formalizing the restoration process.

Church leaders indicated that once restored, the building will continue to serve the community as a space for spiritual, edu-

cational, and social outreach activities. □



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Aruban legends: Frenchman's Pass



(Oranjestad)—If you ever plan on taking a group tour of the island, you may pass through the Frenchman's Pass in Balashi. The Frenchman's pass (known to locals as "Franse Pas") remains a mysterious—and spooky—road of which its legend is told from generation to gen-

eration.

The history of the Frenchman's pass—and how it got its name—dates back to the colonization era, when the French tried to colonize the island, but were met with an angry mob of indigenous settlers, refusing

to give up their land. However, as the French were heavily equipped with fire arms, the indigenous settlers began to retreat, and hid away in nearby caves. The French colonizers tried to smoke them out of the caves, but the indigenous settlers ended up inhaling too much smoke and most died in those caves. From then on, this passage was known as Frenchman's Pass, and there have been many accounts of spirits roaming the area of Spanish Lagoon.

There are many ghost stories surrounding this area, but one of the most famous one involves a lonely hitchhiker, trying to find a ride back home in the dark rainy night.

Sometime after trying to hitch a ride home, the man

saw a car approaching, appearing almost ghost-like in the rain. However, since he needed a ride real bad, he didn't think twice and jumped in. But to his horror, he noticed that there was no driver in the front. Paralyzed with fear, he didn't dare to get out, and the car started to move.

When approaching a sharp turn, the hitch hiker braced for impact, but just when he thought the car might drive straight off the road and crash, he saw a hand appear out the window and turn the wheel. For the next few turns, the hand appeared again. After having had enough, the man decided to jump out and he ran to Santa Cruz.

Arriving at a nearby bar, he ordered a drink and began

to tell everyone about his experience. Everyone grew quiet, because they realized he wasn't some drunk messing around; he was telling the truth.

Sometime later, two men walked into the bar and one of them noticed the hitchhiker. He called out to his buddy and said: "Look, there's the idiot who sat in our car when we were pushing it!"

French man's pass is one of the few sites on the island that keeps the locals on their toes. While most ghost stories may not have real grounds—or some may even be a set up story for a joke, this pass holds a lot of value to our culture of folkloric story-telling. □

Source: visitaruba.com

Cas di Torto

Cas di torto (also called cas di lodo or cas di bara) is a traditional building technique from Aruba. It refers to a type of houses made of mud with rounded corners. These houses were usually found around the plantations. The few structures that still exist are the oldest structures that are left standing in the country.

The technique probably came over from the Venezuelan Paraguaná Peninsula in the 18th century. Existing houses date back 150 years. Until 1925 many houses on Aruba were built using this technique, afterwards it fell into disuse. In

2005 there were 62 cas di torto houses left, of which only four were in good condition.

The skeleton of the houses is made up of round wooden poles placed with distances of 1.5 feet between them. Branches are interwoven between them, completing the structural support. On this basis, loam is applied, mixed with sand, water and paragrass. This is then coated with aloe vera juice, which gives the white color and helps to protect against the weather.

On top of the poles pieces of wood are fitted that

serve as the base for the roof beams. Until 1815 the roofing usually consisted

of corn (maize) stems, afterwards the nuclei of columnar cacti were used.

The floor is made of loam, mixed with cement or cow dung.

The houses were usually divided into a kitchen, a living room, a porch and a bedroom. In the kitchen would be a wooden or metal barrel for storing water that was collected in small rain ponds. Around this barrel a thick loam wall would be erected. Often large families would live in these houses; people would sleep on mats on the floor.

If you visit the Arikok National Park you will be able to see a very nice cas di torto. □



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Explore Aruba!



(ORANJESTAD)—Aruba Today collected some things to do **BEYOND** the beach. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. **Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.**

Arikok National Park

The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about

the island's indigenous roots. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In total, the park consists of 34 square kilometers of protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.acf.aw

Natural Bridge

One of Aruba's favorite tourist attractions is the Natural Bridge. For thousands of years, pounding waves and strong winds have slowly chiseled away the limestone cliffs along Aruba's north coast to create several natural bridges. The largest of these bridges used to be the famous Natural Bridge. The bridge was a formation of coral limestone cut out by years of pounding surf, and was one of the largest of these types of spans in the world. It stood some 23 feet (7 meters) above sea level and spans more than 100 feet (30 meters). Unfortunately the bridge collapsed on September 2, 2005. Despite this, it is still the most photographed natural bridge and it remains a popular tourist attraction in Aruba, with the adjacent and intact

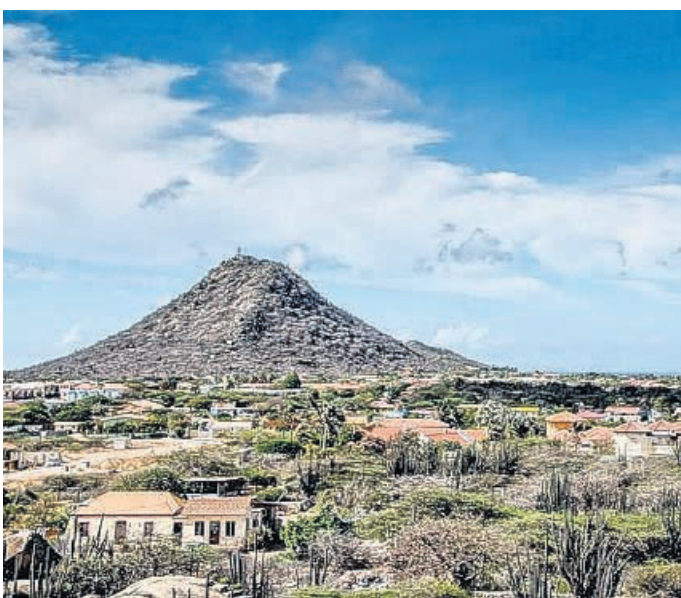


Baby Bridge also meriting a visit. The Natural Bridge is the perfect stop while touring Aruba. There is no admission fee or set hours for visiting. Quench your thirst with refreshing beverages & refuel your tank with local snacks.

The Lourdes Grotto

Named in commemoration of the famous French religious landmark, was created under the guidance of a priest named "Erkamp" and parishioners in the year 1958. The grotto, a shrine built into the rocks is located in Seroe Preto, just off the main road to San Nicolas. A statue of the Virgin Mary, weighing 700 kilos, was hoisted into place in the grotto. Every year, on February 11 (feast of Lady of Lourdes), a procession leaves from the St. Theresita church in San Nicolas to the grotto, where a mass is performed. The grotto is located road-side and can be visited daily. Just make sure you park safely in the event you wish to stop for pictures at this location. □

Enjoy one of the best views on Aruba at the top of the Hooiberg Hill



(Oranjestad)—If you are a regular hiker, or maybe want to spice up your morning work out session, then you might enjoy one of the most popular climbing sites on the island: **The Hooiberg Hill. Accompanied with a 600-step staircase, this hill overlooks a great part of the island, the Caribbean sea, and sometimes even the Santa Anna mountain located in the coastal state of Falcon in Venezuela, providing one of the best views you can get on Aruba.**

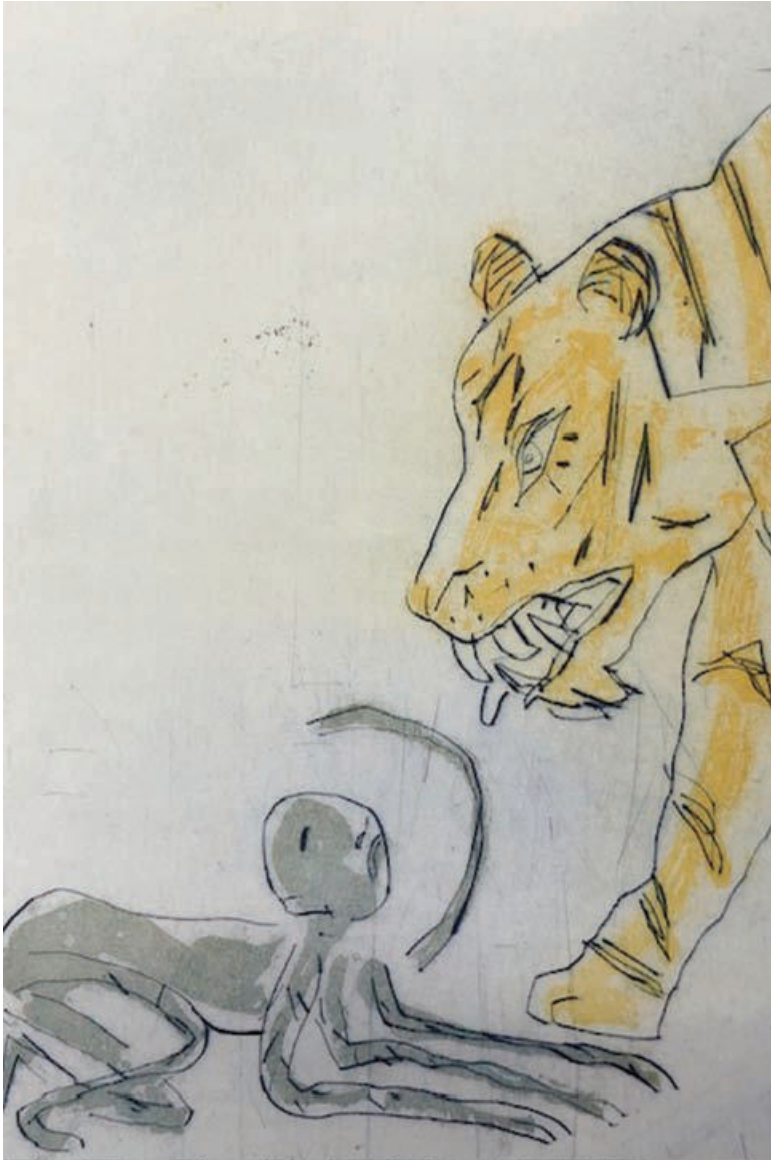
located at the center district of the island, Santa Cruz, the Hooiberg Hill is the second highest point on the island at 165 meters above sea level (or about 540 feet above sea level). The highest point is Jamanota Hill at 189 meters (620 feet), located in the

Arikok National Park.

The staircase that run on the side of the hill was first built in 1951, when Mr. Eduardo Tromp constructed it. At that time, the staircase consisted of 900 steps. Over time, as the steps faced erosion, the government decided to renovate these stairs in 1991. This new project delivered the newer staircase with only 587 steps. However, don't be fooled—it may still be a work out to get on top. In addition, there is now a gazebo placed halfway up the stair for a little rest. The view at this resting stop is also a sight to see.

The best time to climb the hill would be early in the morning or right before sunset, as it may not be as hot. However, the hill is of course open all day, every day. □

Keeping up with the conniving spider... Nanzi fools Cha Tiger



Many years ago, Cha* Tiger did not live in the mondi*, but among civil society. Back then, he was feared by everyone. When he walked past in a halfway, everyone around would make room immediately, that's how ferocious he was.

One night a group of friends was hanging out and they were talking about Cha Tiger. "You know, that tiger sure is incredibly strong and I don't trust him one bit. He probably eats a lot too. Oh, I'm so scared of him!" one person said.

"Oh, don't be stupid! What can Cha Tiger do? He's all bark and no bite, that's it. I certainly am not afraid of him. I bet you guys that I could even sit on his back like I would any donkey." It was Nanzi who said this. The people around him laughed at his remarks, thinking how silly it was for him to say such things.

"You, Nanzi? You are such a liar! He'll stomp you into next Tuesday, stop saying such nonsense."

"I'm not lying!" Nanzi defended himself. "He'll take me all the way to Shon Arei*."

The next morning, Shon Arei already knew of what Nanzi had been saying about Cha Tiger. He was really curious to see if Nanzi was brave enough to put his money where his mouth is. Cha Tiger walked past.

"Hey, Cha Tiger!" someone called to him. He growled at the person. "Hey, Cha Tiger! Listen!"

"Nanzi made fun of you, said he wasn't afraid of you at all! Said he could sit on your back and that you weren't as strong as we think you are."

Cha Tiger stopped dead in his tracks, furious. "Well, I'll set him straight!" Cha Tiger ran toward Nanzi's house, prepared to teach Nanzi a painful lesson. The entire way there he was growling and yelling, making everyone around aware what was going to happen. They all ran inside and peered through the blinds to see the fight that was going to unfold.

Nanzi also heard Cha Tiger's screams, slowly getting closer and closer. He was terrified. His face turned pale, and his teeth started chattering like someone with a high fever. Sweat was dripping down his forehead.

When Cha Tiger arrived at Nanzi's place, he stormed in and saw Nanzi's frail body lying face down in the corner. "Hey, how are you, Cha Tiger?" Nanzi asked, his voice trembling. "I Heard you were making fun of me in front of your little friends, so I came to hear from your own mouth what you have to say to me," Cha Tiger

retorted, still fuming.

"Me? Talk bad about you?" Nanzi chuckled nervously. "People are such liars, I swear. Can't you see how sick I am here?" Nanzi took a pause, like someone who couldn't breathe properly. In his case of course, it was probably from extreme fear. "Shi Maria* wanted to take me to Shon Arei, where someone can heal me from my illness." Still wrapped up in his act, Nanzi turned back face down. "Me, a father of nine little children..."

Cha Tiger was shocked. Nanzi looked absolutely terrible, God knows he was dying.

"Cha Tiger, you're strong. Could you put me on your back and take me to Shon Arei, I can barely walk," Nanzi pleaded. Cha Tiger took pity on the spider and agreed to do this favor. Nanzi climbed on the tiger's back, letting his body fall down and grabbing on to Cha Tiger's neck. "Would you mind putting a rope in your mouth so I can hold on? That way I can sit up straight," Nanzi asked. Cha Tiger growled in reluctance but said OK. And so they made their way to Shon Arei.

Once they started traveling through the mondi, Nanzi turned to Cha Tiger and said: "These mosquitos are so annoying! Cha Tiger, do you mind if I cut a piece of branch so I can keep these mosquitos away?" Cha Tiger let him take his branch.

Eventually they made it out the mondi to where everyone else was. Nanzi immediately perked up and whacked Cha Tiger with his branch, making the tiger jump. He ran all the way to Shon Arei's castle. Exhausted, he plumped down in front of His Majesty.

"See, Shon Arei? Cha Tiger ain't nothing but a big donkey!" Nanzi said proudly. Everyone around cheered: "Hurray, Nanzi!" Poor Cha Tiger was so embarrassed that he was fooled by the conniving spider, and so he ran into the mondi to hide. To this day, it's said that the tiger still hides away in the mondi.

Cha: Nickname placed in front of someone's name and can mean anything, like friend. However, it often has negative connotations first.

Mondi: dry wooded areas found on the ABC islands.

Shon Arei: The King

Shi Maria: Nanzi's wife. □

Story and pictures are from "Kon Nanzi a Nek Shon Arei (i otro kuentanan antiano di e araña sabi)" by Nilda Pinto.

The Lionfish and its threat to our marine

(Oranjestad)—Despite its colorful and striking appearance, the lionfish has become a Caribbean-wide problem for Atlantic sea life. The Aruban marine wild life is also affected by this beautiful dilemma, as it is foreign to our waters and has become a danger to our local fish and reefs.

Originating from the Indo-Pacific Ocean, the lionfish is a relatively small fish. It has no teeth, but it does protect itself against predators using its sharp, colorful spikes. It is said that the sting of a lionfish can be up to 100 times more painful than that of a bee's sting.

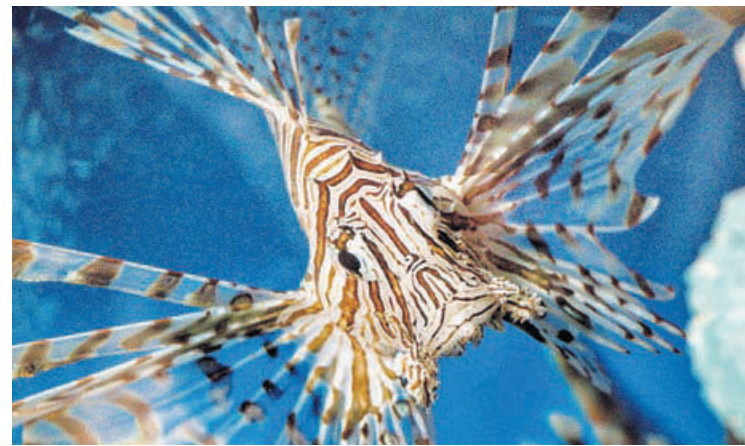
Its natural predators in the Indo-Pacific are sharks and barracudas, but in the Caribbean Sea, local fish do not recognize the lionfish as part of their diet. In other words, the lionfish has no predators in the Caribbean

Sea. And this becomes a major problem for our local marine life; if there are no predators to stimulate population control of lionfish, these fish can continue to reproduce and expand to other parts of the Atlantic, become more invasive and dangerous for other types of fish.

For Aruba, the lionfish is a problem especially for our local coral reefs. According to Patrick van Brakel, lionfish expert and hunter from the Hunting Lionfish Aruba

foundation, every reef has a "cleaning station"—tiny fish that eat algae and other types of waste on a reef, thus maintaining the reef's health and providing food to the fish population in the area. However, as the lionfish feeds off of these tiny fish, it becomes harder for the coral reef to maintain its health.

Patrick also shares the origins of lionfish in the Caribbean Sea. It is theorized that the introduction of these fish in the Atlan-



tic happened in Florida, where people would buy lionfish from across the world to keep in their aquariums. However, lionfish grow, and as these buyers realized that the fish were too much upkeep, they were let out into the ocean to roam free. From continental USA, the lionfish travelled to and invaded the entire Caribbean area, from Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao up to New York. In Aruba, lionfish were discovered in 2009.

Controlling the lionfish population is challenge, as each female fish can lay up

to 40,000 eggs a day. Luckily, we have people like van Brakel who dedicate their lives hunting and capturing these invasive species, using them for consumption and jewelry making.

They are caught with a hand spear, an object resembling a garbage picker with 4 sharp prongs. These spears are used like a sling shot to catch lionfish from a distance. These fish are then put into a collecting tube and taken out of the water. This way, he does his part in protecting the local wild life. □

Meet an Aruban trailblazers: Padu Lampe

(Oranjestad)—This week we remember one of our most beloved Aruban giant, Juan Chabaya Lampe—better known as Padu Lampe or Padu del Caribe. As one of the most important and renowned artists in the Aruban cultural sphere, Padu's long career led him to be honored today as "the father of culture."

On April 26th, 1920, Juan Chabaya Lampe "Padu Lampe/Padu del Caribe" was born in Nassaustraat, Oranjestad. He grew up in a happy musical environment, and it is because of this that he developed a

love for music. Starting from the age of 12, he was agile in the clarinet, mandolin and cuatro. Henry Lampe, his father, was also a well-known pianist and musician.

In a publication of the informative seminar, "Observer", from august 1st, 1962, Padu's many merits and friendly personality stood out. It was said that he was an excellent pianist with a personal style and full of surprises. Secondly, though the composer was not too familiar with music theory, he showed innovations in his compositions. Lastly, Padu was a promoter of Creole music around the

world.

One of the most important moments in Aruban history, in which he was able to witness first-hand, was the first radio broadcast on the island on March 20th, 1954. Here, he was accompanied by Antillean guitarist Julian Coco and Hubert "Loi" Booi.

In the art world, Padu was also a known painter. During his youth, he made several painting using his unique style. In 1939, he participated in an art exhibit in New York, where he won a bronze medal for his painting "Typical View of Aruba."

Padu remained a popular artist within the Dutch Antilles and the Caribbean as a pianist, singer, author and painter. Padu Lampe was a local artist who became renowned in Venezuela, Colombia, The U.S. and The Netherlands too. In the 1950s, he sold no less than 50 thousand copies of his long-playing albums (LPs).

Padu Lampe was a multi-faceted artist, inspired by his interest in parapsychol-

ogy and supernatural phenomenon. He wrote three books in Papiamentu on the subject in 1986, which was published by the Aruban National Printing Press with sponsorship provided by the Prince Bernhard Funds Netherlands Antilles.

Besides that, Padu passed his exam on "Society to Advanced Ethical Hypnosis" in 1964 in New Jersey. He received a certificate as a hypnotechician, which gave him the authority to practice hypnosis in some states.

Over the course of his career, he received many accolades and awards in Aruba, Curacao, Venezuela and the Netherlands.

Padu del Caribe passed away on November 29th, 2019, at the age of 99 years old. Padu brought the Aruban culture around the world. His legacy will remain ingrained in the Aruban cultural history, and he will be known forever as one of the most influential trailblazers of our community.



Padu will always be in Aruba's heart, because he had composed various special songs dedicated to the mothers of the island; his song "Sonrisa di un baby" ("A baby's Smile") has been written in three different languages. Padu also wrote our national anthem "Aruba Dushi Tera", along with Mr. Rufo Wever. This song was approved by the government of Aruba and was named the official anthem of the island in 1976.

Other songs that have been considered as being almost a second anthem for Arubans is the special composition he wrote for his wife Daisy Croes called "Abo so". Daisy later passed away in 1994. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 43 Swift

1 Looks forward to

7 Labyrinth

11 Malay island

12 Weary sigh

13 Face a difficulty

15 Casts a ballot

16 Prayer ender

18 Turn to slush

21 Recipe instruction

22 Singer Harry

24 Old calamity

25 Halloween cry

26 Director Spike

27 Tickled

29 Ore source

30 Rigging support

31 Wagers

32 Fancy parties

34 Begin fighting

40 Heaps

41 "Search me"

42 Like lawns in the morning

DOWN

1 Jackson 5 hit

2 Court

3 Sleeve filler

4 Indignant cry

5 Wyo-ming's — Range

6 Chimney grime

7 Squishy and wet

8 Boxing great

9 Ray-gun sound

10 Snaky shape

14 Influence

OBAMA SECTS
PAPAS IGLOO
TREYS GOATS
FERN MOO
TOOLSHED
UNDO ORATED
STOWS SYRIA
KOREAN FUND
ROOTLESS
VAT TRIO
ALITO AWARE
STEAM RECUR
TORRE ARENA

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12
13 14
15
16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23
24 25 26
27 28 29
30 31
32 33
34 35 36 37 38 39
40 41
42 43

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-2 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

XMAGEHMS VXND LHGE KTUD,

IXV! — HG'C X IDXPGHQPK

VDXK. — DVDFHK KXSXCCD

Cryptoquote: A PARTY WITHOUT CAKE IS REALLY JUST A MEETING. — JULIA CHILD

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the

Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE	
14 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C NORWEGIAN EPIC Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 17:00 Berth: I
15 WED	BRILLIANCE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: B SERENADE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C FREEWINDS Arrival: 6:00 Departure: **** Berth: E
16 THU	QUEEN ANNE Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 17:00 Berth: c STAR PRINCESS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 18:00 Berth: I
17 FRI	FREEWINDS [Departure] Arrival: **** Departure: 22:30 Berth: E
19 SUN	GRAND PRINCESS Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 17:00 Berth: B SCENIC ECLIPSE Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

	1							
		9	2				5	4
4	5			6				1
					6	9		
	6	1		3			2	5
3	8	5						
	7			2	5	1	4	
			9			8	6	
				4	8			

Difficulty: ★★★★★

4/18

Answer to previous puzzle

1	5	6	7	4	3	9	8	2
3	4	9	1	2	8	7	5	6
8	2	7	9	5	6	3	4	1
9	7	8	4	1	5	6	2	3
4	6	2	3	7	9	8	1	5
5	1	3	6	8	2	4	7	9
6	8	5	2	9	7	1	3	4
7	9	4	5	3	1	2	6	8
2	3	1	8	6	4	5	9	7

Difficulty: ★★★★★

4/17

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Key Atlantic current could weaken more than expected: study

Brest, France

A key Atlantic Ocean current system that helps regulate the planet's climate could weaken more than expected by 2100, with potentially devastating consequences worldwide, a new study has found.

Known as Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), this conveyor belt of currents plays a crucial role in redistributing heat by transporting warmer waters from the tropics northward. An AMOC collapse could lead to harsher winters in northern Europe, droughts in South Asia and the Sahel region in Africa, and higher sea levels in North America, among other consequences.

Previous climate model projections have estimated an average slowdown of around 32 percent by the end of the century due to climate change.

The latest study, published Wednesday in the journal *Science Advances*, estimates that the system could slow by 51 percent by 2100 under a mid-range scenario for greenhouse gas emissions, with a margin of error of plus or minus eight percentage points.

"We obtained an estimate of a future AMOC slowdown that is more severe than we expected," climate scientist Valentin Portmann, the paper's lead author, told AFP.

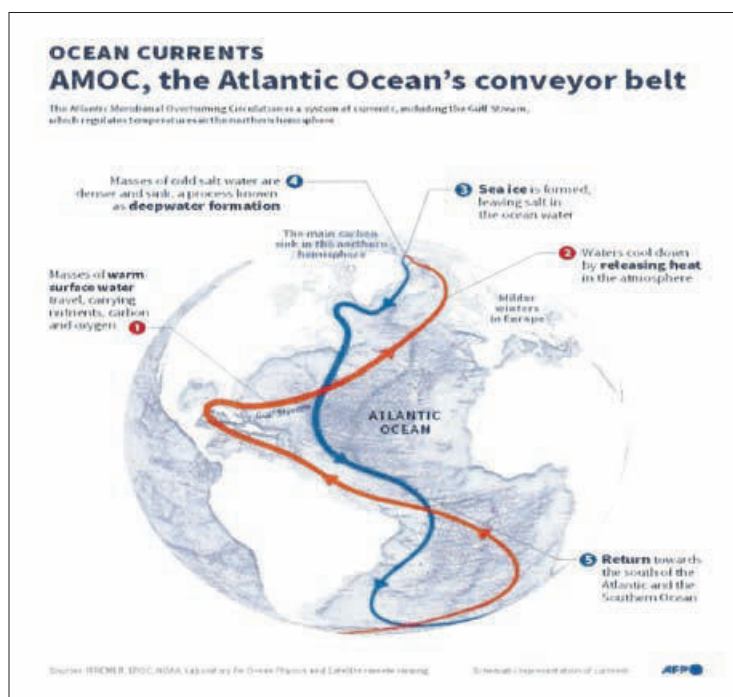
"We are closer to a critical state that is worrying," Portmann said.

Predicting what will happen to AMOC in the future is a topic of debate in the scientific community.

"There is a kind of consensus on the fact that this circulation will slow down. But there is still quite a bit of debate about the intensity of this slowdown," said Florian Sevellec, research director at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in Brest, France.

- Refining predictions -

In its 2021 report, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said



Infographic showing the effects and functioning of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), which is part of the global system of ocean currents / AFP / Sabrina BLANCHARD

AMOC will "very likely decline" over this century. But the panel of international experts also expressed "medium confidence" that a collapse of AMOC would not take place before 2100. The latest study, conducted by researchers from the CNRS and the University of Bordeaux in southwest France, seeks to "refine this estimate of the future slowdown" and "reduce uncertainty", Sevellec said.

While nearly all climate models predict an AMOC slowdown by 2100, the projections range widely: from as little as three percent to as much as 72 percent, de-

pending on varying emissions scenarios. Portmann said the new study seeks to narrow that uncertainty using "observational constraints" a statistical approach that combines real-world observations with results from climate models.

- 'The debate is not over' -

Stefan Rahmstorf, an oceanographer at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), said the paper showed that pessimistic models "are unfortunately the realistic ones, in that they agree better with observational data". Rahmstorf, who who was

not involved in the study, said that this means AMOC would be so weak by 2100 that it would "very likely" be "on the way to full shut-down".

Fabien Roquet, a physical oceanography professor at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, said the study was interesting but he cautioned that another team using a similar method reached opposite conclusions last year.

"What is certain, however, is that the climate is warming rapidly," Roquet said. "Whether the AMOC weakens or not, large-scale changes are already underway... and should intensify in the coming decades."

"The debate is not over," said Sevellec, who was also not part of the research team but whose thesis on AMOC was used for the study. "One paper does not settle a scientific debate." □

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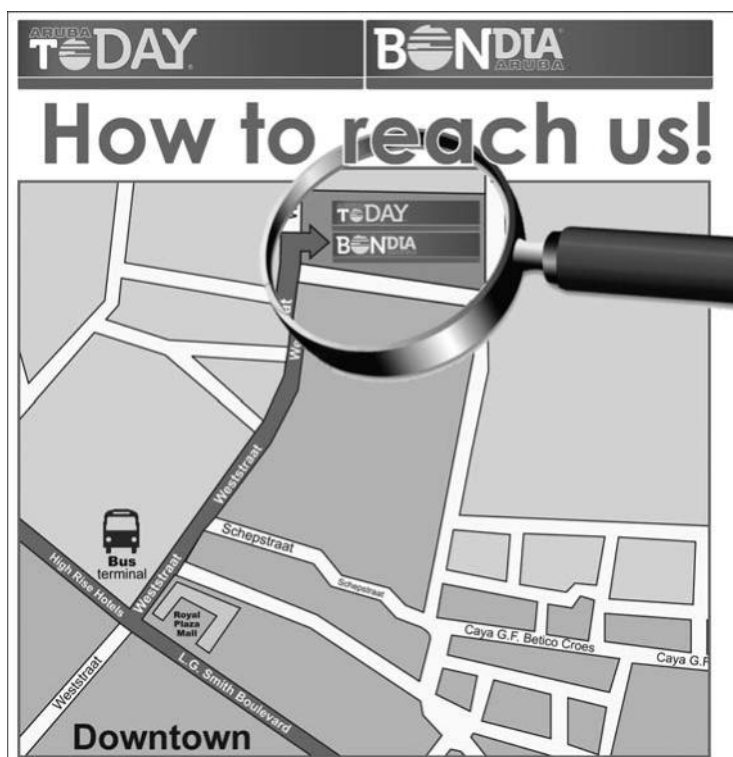
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Video game voice star Troy Baker says 'only humans' can make art

Paris, France

Millions of gamers around the world may not know Troy Baker's face but would recognise his voice -- perhaps as the heartbroken father Joel in "The Last of Us" or an intrepid Indiana Jones in "The Great Circle". That human connection is why the 50-year-old actor is "not afraid of anything replacing artists" even as creative industries are beset by fears of artificial intelligence taking over.

Baker spoke to AFP soon after the release of a new title, "Screamer", the latest in a string of 430 games and animations to which he has lent his vocal cords rather than his bearded face and piercing blue eyes, according to IMDb.

Although AI can easily ape an actor's voice, "we're talking about art," Baker said.

"We make art. Art is inherently, intrinsically a human expression, and only humans can make it."

In "Screamer", a car racing title released last month for PC and consoles, Baker plays the role of Mister A., the organiser of a tournament whose high-octane clashes are interspersed



Troy Baker attends New York Comic Con 2025 at The Jacob K. Javits Convention Center on October 12, 2025 in New York City.

with animated sequences. "History has shown us that technology creates more opportunities than it replaces," Baker said.

Nevertheless, "anytime, in any art form, people are fearful of their jobs," he acknowledged. "I understand it." Baker himself came in for online criticism in early 2022 for associating with a company specialising in NFTs ("non-fungible tokens", or

tradeable digital objects) before quickly backing out.

- 'I love Joel' -

Baker fell almost by accident into voice work in the early 2000s as he was trying to get a rock band off the ground.

But it was in 2013 that he broke through with the role of Joel in "The Last Of Us", the action-adventure game that tells the story of

a man and a young girl traversing a post-apocalyptic America.

Baker's motions were also captured in his performance as the gruff and bearded father.

Popular the world over, the game's success spawned a 2020 sequel and an HBO series starting in 2023, in which Baker appeared for a cameo role as a different character.

"I love Joel. I miss him every day," Baker said, while adding that he "cannot imagine any more of (his) story that's left to tell" despite rumours of a third game regularly circulating online.

Unlike the "multimillion-dollar sets" common in the movie business, in games "there's times when I'm given a microphone, a script and a Zoom call," said Baker, whose other major roles include the brother of the protagonist Nathan Drake in "Uncharted 4" (2016) and the antagonist of two "Death Stranding" games (2019 and 2025).

- 'Ask questions' -

Baker struck just the right tone in 2024's "Indiana Jones and the Great Circle," in which he played Harrison Ford's film hero in his prime.

He recalled how at first, he "prepared in a completely wrong way" by attempting to copy one-for-one the movie star's voice and movements.

"That's the least Indiana Jones thing I could do," he later realised, saying he "had to let go" of Ford and do things his own way. □

Marvel premieres first 'Avengers: Doomsday' trailer at CinemaCon

Las Vegas, United States

Disney showcased the first theatrical trailer of the new Marvel franchise film "Avengers: Doomsday" on Thursday during the closing day of CinemaCon in Las Vegas.

The clip played twice for the enthusiastic audience at the Colosseum at Caesars Palace offered the first look at Robert Downey Jr. as the villainous Doctor Doom.

It marks the actor's return to the Marvel Cinematic Universe since the death of Iron Man in 2019's "Avengers: Endgame."

The footage also teased several dramatic moments from the movie, including a fight between Gambit and Shang-Chi played by Channing Tatum and Simu Liu, respectively and

Patrick Stewart reprising his role as X-Men's Professor Xavier, warning: "Something's coming, something we may not be able to deter."

At the very end of the trailer, Chris Evans returns as his

character Steve Rogers, otherwise known as Captain America, appearing before a surprised-looking Thor (Chris Hemsworth) as the Norse god's Mjolnir hammer flies into Rogers' hands.

Both Evans and Downey

Jr. were on the stage at CinemaCon to present the trailer alongside the film's directors, brothers Joe and Anthony Russo.

"I said I would only come back if there was a real reason," Evans told the crowd.

"And in Doomsday, there is a very real reason that these heroes need Steve Rogers."

"Avengers: Doomsday" follows the events of "Avengers: Endgame," bringing together a host of Marvel characters new and old, including the X-Men, previously excluded from the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

The movie will have its U.S. premiere on December 18, the same day as Denis Villeneuve's "Dune: Part Three."

Theater owners hope the double-whammy will be a box office bonanza, ending the year on a high note amid declining revenues.

- Sequels on the way -

Marvel's presentation was the grande finale of Disney's CinemaCon showcase.

The annual convention allows movie studios to preview their upcoming slates to theater owners and the press.

Tom Hanks, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson and Queen Latifah were among the superstars to showcase footage from their upcoming Disney films.

Director Jon Favreau introduced the opening scene of his new movie, the latest Star Wars flick "The Mandalorian and Grogu," out next month. □



U.S. actor Chris Evans (C), US actor Robert Downey Jr. (R) and US filmmaker Joe Russo (L) promote "Avengers: Doomsday" during the Walt Disney Studios presentation at CinemaCon at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace on April 16, 2026 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Durant not only Rockets weapon, Lakers star James warns

Los Angeles, United States
Superstar LeBron James warned Thursday that Kevin Durant isn't the only threat the depleted Los Angeles Lakers must be wary of in their NBA playoffs first-round clash with the Houston Rockets.

The series, which starts on Saturday in Los Angeles, has been billed as a renewal of their rivalry, which stretches back to 2008 and includes three clashes in the NBA Finals.

In the 2012 Finals, James's Miami Heat beat Durant's Oklahoma City Thunder. Five years later Durant's Golden State Warriors beat James's Cleveland Cavaliers in the championship series, repeating the feat the following season.

James has long voiced his admiration for Durant, his teammate on two Olympic gold medal-winning teams. But the 41-year-old said the Lakers can't afford to disregard Durant's supporting cast.

"We know that he's the head of the snake," James said. "But it's the Houston Rockets and they have some damn good players on their team."

"It's not just a KD team. It's the whole group," James added, calling out Alperen



Kevin Durant #7 of the Houston Rockets scores against Joan Beringer #19 of the Minnesota Timberwolves during the first half at Toyota Center on April 10, 2026 in Houston, Texas.

Sengun, Amen Thompson and Jabari Smith in noting that "everyone who goes on the floor is a threat, and we have to be ready for that."

The Rockets' aggression could be particularly difficult for the Lakers to counter with key offensive assets Luka Doncic and Austin Reaves sidelined by injury. Doncic has sought treatment in Europe in a bid to hasten his return from a hamstring strain and

Reaves was also sidelined late in the regular season with an oblique muscle injury, with a return date for both still uncertain.

Lakers coach JJ Redick acknowledged that puts even more on the shoulders of James.

"We're going to need him to facilitate. We're going to need him to score," Redick said. "We're going to need him to defend and rebound."

"I think he recognizes the task at hand, and he's very

locked in."

Durant, who arrived in Houston from Phoenix last July as part of a blockbuster seven-team deal, also downplayed any individual duel with James.

"It's always great playing against great players," Durant said. "You feel their presence on the floor even if you're not matched up with them. "Of course from the outside looking in, casual folks who are not in the life with us every day, yeah the matchup is defi-

nitely fun. Two great players who have been in the league for a long time. But everybody who's involved in this series knows it's much deeper than that."

-Top-seeded Pistons embrace underdog tag-

Detroit are tuning out the naysayers who tip the Boston Celtics, New York Knicks or even fourth-seeded Cleveland to beat the top-seeded Pistons to the NBA Eastern Conference crown. "Everybody got a right to their own opinion," guard Ausar Thompson said this week as the Pistons prepped for their playoff opener on Sunday.

"We don't really worry about that. We all believe we could not only come out the East but win it all."

"We just focus on that, focus on ourselves and let everybody on the outside say what they've got to say."

The Pistons piled up 60 wins behind an MVP-caliber season from Cade Cunningham.

They topped the East from November on, weathering a string of injuries that included Cunningham's late-season absence with a collapsed lung to finish with the third-best record in the league. □

Zverev fights past Cerundolo to reach Munich semis

Munich, Germany

Top seed Alexander Zverev battled back from a set down to beat Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo on Friday and book a spot in the semi-finals of the Munich ATP tournament.

The three-time Munich champion won 5-7, 6-0, 6-2 and will take on Italy's Flavio Cobolli on Saturday for a place in the final.

Zverev burst out of the blocks and served for a 5-1 lead in the opening set but appeared to suddenly lose his rhythm, winning just one more game as Cerundolo powered back to take the opening set.

As the second set began, and with the support of the home crowd, the 28-year-old found his form as swiftly as he had lost it, bouncing

back to win the final two sets while dropping just two games.

"Even in the first set when I was up 4-1, he started playing unbelievable. He started returning unbelievable," Zverev said.

"My first-serve percentage was very high, and he started returning a foot in front of the baseline. So there was nothing I could do, to be honest."

The German came into Friday's match holding a 4-3 career advantage over the fifth-seeded Cerundolo but had never previously beaten the Argentine in three matches on clay.

"Definitely happy to get the win today against Francisco, for the first time on clay," Zverev said on court after the win.

Zverev, whose most recent title came in Munich a year ago, is chasing a record fourth triumph at the tournament, having also won in 2017 and 2018.



Germany's Alexander Zverev plays a backhand return to Italy's Jannik Sinner during the Monte Carlo ATP Masters Series Tournament semi-final tennis match on Court Rainier III at the Monte-Carlo Country Club in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, south-eastern France on April 11, 2026.

On the other side of the draw, American second seed Ben Shelton overcame Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca to keep hopes of a 2025 Munich

final rematch with Zverev alive.

Shelton, the world number six, won 6-3, 3-6, 6-3. The American has never won a clay court tournament, having lost in straight sets to Zverev in Munich a year ago.

In the semi-finals, Shelton will take on Alex Molcan, who cruised past Denis Shapovalov in straight sets 6-4, 6-4.

Earlier, Cobolli was the first to book a spot in the final four after he defeated Czech Vit Kopriva 6-3, 6-2. Playing on his favourite surface, the fourth seed won the opening set and cruised to a 5-1 lead in the second. He missed two match points on Kopriva's serve before finishing it off in the following game. □

'Disgrace': fans outraged by World Cup transit fare hikes

Washington, United States

Football fans have expressed outrage at the exorbitant price of transit fares to get to World Cup matches, following reports that US transport authorities have jacked up prices just for this summer's tournament.

New Jersey Transit is planning to charge fans more than \$100 for tickets from Penn Station in Manhattan to MetLife Stadium in New Jersey during the World Cup, according to a report in The Athletic.

A return ticket for the journey normally costs \$12.90.

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority confirmed this month that return tickets from Boston to Gillette Stadium would cost \$80 up from the usual event-day price of \$20.

"It's a disgrace. In recent tournaments, transportation was either included in the ticket price or offered at a heavily discounted rate for ticket holders," Guillaume Aupretre, a spokesman for France's main supporters' group, told AFP. "They keep piling on the extra costs without giving any



The LED screen inside a NJ Transit train is seen at Secaucus Train Station prior to the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 semi-final match between Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid CF on July 09, 2025 in Secaucus, New Jersey.

thought to the fans," he said, accusing world football's governing body FIFA of shutting out "the most loyal supporters in favor of the wealthy."

France will play all three of its Group I matches in Boston and New Jersey.

"Another day, another rip off at this World Cup. What on earth is going on?" Free Lions, a group for travelling England fans, posted on so-

cial media.

England also has group matches scheduled at the Boston and New Jersey stadiums.

- 'Awfully high' -

New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill blamed FIFA for the price hikes, pointing to a \$48 million bill the state faces to ensure the safety of fans going to the eight games at the MetLife sta-

dium.

"I won't stick New Jersey commuters for that tab for years to come, that's not fair," Sherrill wrote on social media, adding that FIFA stood to make \$11 billion at the World Cup.

"So here's the bottom line: Fifa should pay for the rides, but if they don't I'm not going to let New Jersey commuters get taken for one." That sentiment was echoed

by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, who wrote on social media on Tuesday that FIFA should foot the bill for transport costs to World Cup venues.

FIFA, which is already facing severe criticism over the sky-high cost of many match ticket prices, issued a strongly-worded statement criticising the transport price hike.

FIFA said that the original host city agreements "required free transportation for fans to all matches".

A re-negotiation stipulated that transport would be offered "at cost" on match days, FIFA added.

"We are quite surprised by the NJ Governor's approach on fan transportation," FIFA said.

"The FIFA World Cup will bring millions of fans to North America along with the related economic impact."

It added: "FIFA is not aware of any other major event previously held at NYNJ Stadium, including other major sports, global concert tours, etc., where organizers were required to pay for fan transportation." □

Embattled LIV Golf to make 'surprise' changes: CEO

Mexico City, Mexico

LIV Golf is preparing to make structural changes that "might surprise some people," CEO Scott O'Neil said Thursday, as the embattled breakaway league scrambles to fend off rumors it could soon collapse without Saudi funding.

Multiple outlets this week reported that Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund will shortly stop bankrolling the divisive league, which has spent billions to lure top golfers away from the traditional PGA and DP World tours.

The league has said its current season will continue "full throttle," and this week's Mexico City tournament began Thursday as planned, although coverage was hit with a lengthy broadcast blackout due to local power outages.

"I talked about some structural changes. They're coming," said O'Neil, in an interview broadcast during the Mexico City event.

"You can ask just about the 50 people I met in Augusta," he said, referring to last weekend's Masters venue.

"I rolled out the plan. We have one, and it is... It might surprise some people."

The Saudi-backed tour, which features major winners including Bryson DeChambeau and Jon Rahm, and a focus on faster, geographically di-

verse and team-oriented competitions, has bitterly divided the world of golf since its 2022 launch.

Seeking to tap into markets beyond the United States, it has attracted strong crowds to tournaments in countries including Australia and South Africa, but has struggled to bag lucrative television deals.

The Saudi wealth fund is estimated to have spent around \$5 billion on LIV Golf. But at a five-year plan presentation this week it said it would focus on "increasing the efficiency of investments."

O'Neil said Thursday that the LIV Golf tour would "probably" have to raise money.

He pointed to a previously touted strategy of selling stakes in LIV Golf's 13 team franchises, and said he

had received "two calls this morning" on the topic. The league plans to replicate sports like Formula 1 with separately owned teams.

Sales of minority or even controlling stakes in two teams to wealthy individuals or companies were being explored this year prior to the reports of a possible Saudi withdrawal.

In January, Bloomberg reported that the league was targeting valuations up to \$300 million per team. There is currently no public valuation of what the teams are worth.

O'Neil also pushed back on media coverage of LIV Golf in recent days, in particular a story from Britain's Telegraph newspaper reporting that executives had been called into an emergency meeting in New York. □



Scott O'Neil, LIV Golf CEO, looks on during the award ceremony on day three of LIV Golf Chicago at Bolingbrook Golf Club on August 10, 2025 in Bolingbrook, Illinois.